DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 554 CS 010 644

AUTHOR Chase, Dorothy D.
TITLE Using A Local Area Network and Other Software With Adults.
PUB DATE May 91
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (36th, Las Vegas, NV, May 6-10, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Students; Community Colleges; *Computer Networks; *Reading Writing Relationship; Student Motivation; Two Year Colleges; *Word Processing; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Collaborative Learning; *Collaborative Writing; Community College of Southern Nevada; Computer Assisted Writing; Writing Development

ABSTRACT

A computer-based collaborative approach to writing like the Daedalus Instructional System (DIS) can help students to learn to write for communication and to read for understanding. The DIS, created to reflect the collaborative learning philosophy, is networked, and fosters communication through reading and writing. The system provides CONTACT, an electronic mail board; QUICKSTART, a word processor; MINDWRITER and DESCANT, a series of prompts to generate ideas and aid in the review of writing; UTILITIES, a 'housekeeping' program; and INTERCHANGE, a real-time writing program. INTERCHANGE and CONTACT can be used together for collaborative writing. While students in the reading program at Community College of Southern Nevada began by using the DIS in class once a week, they soon chose to meet in the lab for both class periods, and even began to compose on the computer, collaborate with each other, and spend long hours writing voluntarily. As they took responsibility for their own work, and as they read the models provided by their instructor who participated in INTERCHANGE discussions and on the electronic mailboard, their writing became more precise. In addition, the computer skills they learned will carry over into the workplace and into other courses studied. Finally, although students who used DIS showed no significant improvement on ABLE, a reading placement test created by The Psychological Corporation, they did become more confident writers and showed improvement in structure, mechanics and vocabulary. Their self-esteem was visibly higher, and they showed more enjoyment in the writing process. (PRA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED334554

Dorothy D. Chase

Using a Local Area Network and Other Software With Adults

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dorothy C Pase

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS010644

Dorothy D. Chase

Using a Local Area Network and Other Software With Adults

The Reading Program at Community College of Southern Nevada consists of separate courses in Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Spelling. Five years ago, there was a need to change the program from a 'drop-in' lab, from which most students 'dropped-out', to a more structured one. The new program required the students to write as well as to read.

The program re-organization was effective. Student registration, retention, and learning of skills in all courses began to improve. However, it was evident that most students came to their coursework with large skill deficits (in writing and critical thinking as well as in reading comprehension); shy and language impoverished students seldom become involved in class discussions; and the few hearing impaired students enrolled were even less involved despite the aid of skilled interpreters.

During two days spent at Gallaudet University observing classes and talking with instructors on the teaching of reading comprehension and writing skills to hearing impaired students, I was introduced to ENFI (English Natural Form Instruction Program). This local area network (LAN) enabled classes of students to communicate through writing in real time; it fostered both writing improvement and reading improvement. Research into ENFI and other LANs led to my discovery of the Daedalus Instructional System.

The Daedalus Instructional System was created according to principles of collaborative learning philosophy; it is networked, and it fosters communication through reading and writing. It

ED401744

provides CONTACT, an electronic mail board on which both private and public messages may be left; QUICKSTART, a simple word processor which is subservient to the writing process; MINDWRITER, a series of prompts to generate ideas; DESCANT, another series of prompts to aid in review of writing whether it is ones own writing or that of another person who has shared a file name; UTILITIES, a utilities program to take care of 'housekeeping'; and INTERCHANGE, a real-time writing program (There are a myriad ways in which the transcripts can be used by the instructor).

Students in the Reading Program now use the Daedalus Instruction System in class once a week. INTERCHANGE is used to discuss class readings, sentence structure, mechanics, and other topics of interest and relevance to the students. Since the instructor can choose to have the students write under a pseudonym, their own names, or no name, the students have little trepidation about speaking their minds. According to Barker and Kemp (1990), the computer-based collaborative approach to writing develops in students the desire to make meaningful statements to 'real' people. The truth of this statement became evident as the students used INTERCHANGE and CONTACT, then began to write collaboratively. Some of the students stated that they benefitted from knowing the opinions of others, and seeing how other students used vocabulary and expressed their ideas. This they were unable to do when the work was seen only by the instructor. The students were truly writing for communication and reading for understanding.

Other software is used in the lab for drill and practice as

are other support materials. The students practice the skills taught in class; they choose to either work alone or with other students.

All aspects of the Daedalus system are used with students in several writing courses. At first, the students met in a regular classroom once a week for 'traditional' instruction then in the lab to use the Daedalus system. Before long, the students met in the lab for both class periods because they preferred to do so. The students either work individually, or in small groups, while the remainder of the class works on the computers. The students began composing on the computer, using their textbooks as tools, collaborating with each other, and spending long hours on the computers voluntarily. They even asked permission to write their final exam on the computers! Other software is available in the lab which the students may choose to use alone, or with others.

With the use of the Daedalus system, the students were charged with an energy to work which was unmeasurable. Many of them spent hours before or after class simply writing and re-writing either working alone, or collaborating. Whereas, previously, some students had not been involved in class discussions, now all had a chance to 'be heard'. Writing became more precise as the students took responsibility for their own work, and as they read the models provided by their instructor who participated in INTERCHANGE discussions and on the electronic mailboard. A statement Flores (1990) made in reference to composing a feminist community of writers holds good for all instructors. She stated

that the networking capabilities of computers are an important resource to aid in altering the 'traditional patterns of communication in the classroom to help our students achieve greater respect for their own voices, a greater sense of the context of community in composition, and a stronger connection to the community of scholars'.

Just as we need to utilize a variety of methods and tools to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom, we need to establish the higher education system as part of the service economy which has developed from the information explosion of recent years. Modern business practices necessitate the use of the ubiquitous computer. Michael R. Burwell (1991) stated that he is representative of a growing number of truck driving blue collar workers who regularly needs to use one or more computers in the course of his daily work. He is ' convinced that there are very few segments of the work force that cannot benefit from the development of computer technology'.

Many students will be faced with using computers in the workplace - if they are not already. Some will turn down a job through fear of 'the machine'. The skills learned in the relatively unstressful atmosphere of the classroom do carry over into the workplace as well as into other courses studied.

The instrument used for placement in reading courses is ABLE which was created by The Psychological Corporation. Students requesting a Reading Comprehension course are tested first with SelectABLE, then given the appropriate ABLE Reading Comprehension

test. Students in Vocabulary and Spelling courses are not tested. Students in writing are not tested for placement with a standardized test; however, they were tested in class with ABLE. The following information pertains only to the students in the writing courses. No information was given for the students in the reading course because the sample was too small.

Form E was used as a pre-test and Form F as a post-test. The results are for the fall, 1990. No significant difference was shown for those students who had placed in Level 2; three students had dropped 3-6 points; six students had the same score; nine students showed a gain from 2-11 points. Of the three who dropped the course, two had struggled; one had disliked writing intensely. The third was a Japanese student - no reason was given for dropping the class.

No significant difference was shown for those students who had placed in Level 3; nine students had dropped 1-6 points; five students showed a gain from 3-16 points; two students showed no change.

Although the test results showed no significant difference, the students in both the writing courses and reading courses were more confident in their writing; there was definite improvement in structure, the use of mechanics and vocabulary. In addition, their self-esteem was visibly higher, and they showed an enjoyment in the writing process which had not been evident previously. Some students stated that they were enjoying writing for the first time.

References

Barker, T.T., Kemp, F.O. (1990). Network theory: A postmodern pedagogy for the writing classroom. In Carolyn Handa (Ed.), Computers and community (pp 1- 27). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Best, F, Eberhard, R. (1990). In The Futurist, May-June, 23-28

Burwell, M.R. (1991). In Letters, P.C. Magazine: 16.

Flores, Mary J. (1990). Computer conferencing: Composing a feminist community of writers. In Carolyn Handa (Ed.), Computers and community (pp 106-117). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Handa, C. (Ed.). (1990). Computers and community: Teaching composition in the twenty-first century.

Molnar, A.R. (1990). Computers in education: A historical perspective. In T.H.E. Journal 18(4), 80-83

Norman, R. (1988). Computer applications for business and technical writing courses. In Collegiate Microcomputer, 6(3). 177-183.

Thompson, D. (1987). Teaching writing on a local area network. In T.H.E. Journal, 15(2), 92-97.

Thompson, D.P. (1988). Conversational networking: Why the teacher gets most of the lines. In Collegiate Microcomputer 6(3), 193-201

Note - Following is a list of the textbooks which were adopted in response to the need to change the program five years ago:

Level 1 Reading - Reading Skills for Successful Living by Irwin L. Joffe, Wadsworth Publishing Co.
Levels 2, 3, & 4 Reading - College Reading books 1, 2, & 3 by Janet Maker and Minnette Lenier, Wadsworth Publishing Co.
Level 1 Vocabulary - Keys to a Powerful Vocabulary by Janet Maker and Minnette Lenier, Prentice-Hall
Level 2 Vocabulary - The World of Words by Margaret Ann Richek, Houghton Mifflin
Level 1 Spelling - Programmed Spelling and Vocabulary by George W. Feinstein, Prentice-Hall

Vocabulary Level 1 text has since been changed to Building Vocabulary for College by R. Kent Smith, D.C. Heath & Company.

In the fall, we shall begin using Groundwork for College Reading by Bill Broderick, Townsend Press, for Reading Level 1.

In the spring of 1992, we shall begin using The Language of Learning: Vocabulary for College Success by Hopper Carter-Wells, Wadsworth Company, for Vocabulary Level 2.

Two college-level courses in reading came later in the re-organization. They are Critical Reading and Speed Reading.

NADE/IRA